

Pow Wow Facts

Intertribal - The arena MC will announce specific songs for specific dancers. The Intertribal is for everyone, including tourists. If you are unsure of the steps, watch the other dancers. This is the perfect opportunity to join in, learn and have fun all at the same time.

A Dropped Eagle Feather - When an eagle feather drops from a dancers regalia, the Pow Wow stops and a ceremony is performed to restore the feather's lost power. Four traditional dancers, usually veterans, dance around the feather from the four directions and usually attack four times to retrieve it. A person should never touch the fallen eagle feather or any other piece of regalia that may come loose. The dancer will be notified and proper procedure will be followed to correct the situation.

Honour Songs - When the MC announces an Honour song, the crowd shows respect by standing and removing their hats. These songs are requested to honour a returning soldier or relative or to honour a deceased relative. The request may be to a drum from the honoured person's home or to a favourite drum.

Honouring Veterans - Respect for veterans is an integral part of Native culture. This stems from times when the welfare of a village depended on the tribal warriors. To be a warrior was a man's purpose in life. Veterans are honoured because they have devoted their lives so others can live in freedom. Generosity, wisdom, fortitude and bravery are the four virtues held in great honour in many First Nations.

The Giveaway - In Native society, a person who is being honoured often provides gifts to those present. It has been said the poorest man in the village is the Chief. The Chief is responsible for the welfare and wellbeing of his people, therefore he often does without so his people can live more comfortably. This is where the idea of giveaways comes from and is carried on from. Today it is common to have giveaways in honour of guests or a specific person at Pow Wows.



CURVE LAKE CULTURAL CENTRE
1024 MISSISSAUGA STREET
CURVE LAKE, ONTARIO
K0L 1R0
TEL: 705.657.2758
FAX: 705.657.3413
www.curvelakefirstnation.ca



ANNUAL TRADITIONAL POW WOW

Celebrating Our Traditions



**Third Weekend in
September Annually**

GRAND ENTRY
12:00 p.m. NOON
BOTH DAYS

Pow Wow Etiquette

- There are always lots of Elders who attend Pow Wows. If you want to approach an Elder with a question or a concern, proper etiquette suggests that you offer a small amount of tobacco to the Elder for sharing their knowledge. Any amount of tobacco is acceptable. Be courteous and patient as many times Elders take their time answering questions.
- Every Pow Wow is different. Respect is the key to good Pow Wow etiquette.
- Bring your own chair. The arena seating is reserved for the dancers and other participants.
- Check with the Pow Wow host before taking pictures. Put your camera down for all memorial dances.
- You must seek permission from the MC and the drum to record songs. Many Pow Wows disallow this practice.
- Unless you are wearing regalia, you may dance only during social songs. The MC will let you know when you can dance.
- Only those with permission of the Lead Singer may sit at a drum.
- Everyone must stand and men must remove their hat during Grand Entry, Flag Songs, Invocation, Memorial, Veterans songs and Closing song.
- Supervise your children. Do not let them in the dance arena unless they are dancing.
- Do not touch anyone's regalia without permission.
- Absolutely no drugs, alcohol or pets are allowed on the Pow Wow grounds.

What is a Pow Wow?

Traditionally, a Pow Wow was an annual event held in the spring, after the winter snows had melted. It was a time to celebrate the renewal of life. It was a time to renew old friendships and form new ones. It was an opportunity to hold naming ceremonies and other traditional honouring ceremonies.

Pow Wows are still an important part of the lives of many Native people and are held every weekend from early spring to late fall throughout Canada and the United States. Many families 'hit the Pow Wow Trail' and camp along the way. There are often impromptu singing and dancing competitions at the campsites.



The circle has always been an important symbol to Native people. It's importance can be seen extensively at Pow Wows. The Drum is at the very center of the circle, with the drummers surrounding it. The Dancers dance around the drummers in either a clockwise or counter clockwise direction, according to the regional and Tribal traditions.

The Grand Entry is the parade of dancers participating in the Pow Wow. The Eagle Staff is carried into the circle by a Veteran or a Respected Elder, followed by the Canadian Flag and Tribal flags. Respected Elders, Veterans and invited dignitaries are next. and Jungle Dress Dancers. The men follow, Traditional Dancers first, then Grass Dancers, followed by Traditional Women Dancers, Fancy Shawl Dancers.

After the grand Entry there is a Flag Song and an invocation blessing for the gathering. The Eagle Staff is tied to a pole in the center of the arena or brought to the announcers stand.

The MC will let you know when you may sit down. **It is important to remove one's hat and stand during the Grand Entry and through the Flag Song and Blessing.**

Songs are created and performed for Grand Entry, dance categories and for Honour ceremonies. There are songs for all occasions. There are Honour songs, Veteran songs, and war party songs. Though they may differ in tempo, words and emotions, most Pow Wow songs follow a similar structure. The songs are not written, but recorded and learned by both singers and dancers. The melody of a song gains energy and rhythm as the falsetto voice descends.

Drums have been a significant part of Native life for centuries. Some drums are handed down from family member to family member. Others are donated to a drum group. Traditional drums are made of deer, elk, horse or buffalo hides.

The drum is more than a musical instrument to Native people. It has a life and spirit of its own. Drum groups have ceremonies to have their drum blessed and named. This strengthens the spirit of the drum. Gifts are often made to the drum. Some drums have their own sacred medicine pipes. In some traditions the drum symbolizes the heart beat of the earth. In others, the drum beat represents the powerful medicine of thunder.

Men's Traditional Dance originated when war parties would re-enact battles or when hunters would re-enact tracking their prey. The regalia is subdued. It is often decorated with bead and quill work. The circular bustle of feathers represents renewal and unity. The spikes pointing upward represent a channel between the Creator and all things on earth.

The dancers are often veterans who carry symbols of their status as warriors. The dance movements imitate the journey through life of birds and animals.



Men's Grass Dance is also called the **Omaha** dance as it originated with the Omaha Nation in the mid 1800's. The regalia features colourful fringes representing the grass originally attached to the belts of dancers. Many dancers also wear a hair roach, a crow-belt and an eagle bone whistle. These are Tribal emblems of the Omaha.

Dancers move their head up or down keeping rhythm with the drum, nodding quickly several times to each beat. The movement of the head keeps the roach crest feathers spinning. This is a sign of a talented dancer.

Men's Fancy Dance is quite new to the dance arena. It is thought to have originated in Oklahoma in the early 1900's. Promoters asked dancers to beautify their dance outfits and held contests with cash prizes for the most colourful dancers.

This dance is usually performed by boys and young men. The movements are based on a traditional double step deviating with fancy footwork, increased speed and increasingly intricate steps and body movements. Dancers follow the changing drum beat and stop when the music does with both feet on the ground.

The **Women's Fancy Dance** regalia consists of a decorative knee length cloth dress, beaded moccasins with matching leggings and a fancy shawl. The dance style is similar to men's fancy dance, with intricate foot work and spinning motions.

The **Jingle Dress Dance** is perhaps the newest dance to make it to the dance arena. There are many stories concerning the origins of this dance and the regalia. The most accepted story comes from Mille Lacs, Minnesota. In this account, a Holy Man had a dream where he was met by four women wearing jingle dresses.



They showed him how to make the jingle dress, what type of song was to be used and how the dance was to be performed. The women told him the sound of the dress had the power to heal the sick. Upon waking the Holy Man instructed the women of the village to make jingle dresses. When the dresses were complete the women danced in the way the man instructed them to. As the women danced the Holy Man's grand daughter struggled to rise but was too weak. She was carried around the dance arena. The second time around she was able to walk on her own. Her strength increased as she listened to the sound of the jingles and soon she was able to dance again. She had been healed by the sound of the jingles hitting against each other. The jingle dress and dance spread throughout Ojibwe territory to the Dakota and Lakota in the 1920's and as far west as Montana. Women from many tribes now make and wear jingle dresses at Pow Wows.



Women's Traditional dance and regalia are both subdued. The regalia is usually made from buckskin or deer hide and decorated with porcupine quills, bead work, shells and feathers. There is usually a long fringe to the regalia. The dance is slow, keeping beat with the drum, with one foot always in contact with the earth. The gentle and subtle movements represent the strength and persistence needed for women to survive.

Please remember Native dances mean more than the words imply. Dances are a ceremony and a prayer which encompasses all we believe.